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AUTHOR Goldman, Paul
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ABSTRACT

Despite recent efforts to overhaul teacher training and redesign the American teacher, reform advocates acknowledge that not enough is known about predicting education work force outcomes or their effects on classroom results. Lack of a strong conceptual background and a rigorous practice teaching experience handicaps beginning teachers and provides an inadequate foundation for subsequent career development. Teacher education reform may have gained political momentum more quickly than a research base could be developed. However, this paper suggests that insights and propositions are available from the literature and that applications of social science theories and research on professional, occupational, and organizational socialization will improve our understanding of teacher socialization. To understand the organizational context of high school teacher socialization, one must examine the reciprocal relationship between training and employing organizations and the effects that departmental knowledge and social organization may have on the ways teachers learn their craft over a period of years or even decades. The virtually continuous interaction between the institution of occupational orientation (the university) and the institution of organizational socialization (the school) is accomplished through publications, special partnerships, and a continual influx of newly graduated teachers. Departmental knowledge bases exhibit broad, substantial differences in the development of occupational communities affecting teacher socialization. (33 references) (MLH)

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OCCUPATIONAL VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS:

THEORETICAL AND POLICY ISSUES

Paul Goldman
Department of Educational Policy and Management
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1215
(503) 686-5077

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OCCUPATIONAL VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEORETICAL AND POLICY ISSUES

I. Teacher Training and Socialization as Policy Issue

The educational establishment--in fact educators generally--have in recent years been faced with an anxious public and, in most states, active, inquisitive legislators who confront them with perceived and real inadequacies in public education. The current remedy of choice is to overhaul and revitalize teacher training, to do what the New York Times called "redesigning the American teacher" (Fiske, 1987). We can see these efforts particularly in recommendations proposals for making the five-year teaching degree a requirement for teacher certification and employment. Two prestigious organizations, the Holmes Group (1985) consisting of Deans of colleges of education in research universities, and the Carnegie Commission (1986), consisting of a blue-ribbon panel of educators, public officials, and other distinguished citizens were emphatic in making this recommendations.

Descriptions of apparently successful five-year teaching degree programs at several universities are beginning to appear in journals addressed to practitioners (Blass and Dunbar, 1986; Fiske, 1987; Olson, 1986; Scannell, 1986). These programs attempt to remedy concerns that new teachers are ill-prepared in the liberal arts components of traditional undergraduate degrees and that typical student teaching

experiences neither screen potential teachers nor provide sufficient exposure to the realities of teaching life that new teachers are prepared for the shock of entering the profession. The implied intent is that the lack of both a strong conceptual background and a rigorous practice teaching experience handicaps not only new teachers, but does not provide an adequate foundation for subsequent career development.

The core of these recommended changes is the equipping of new teachers with a liberal arts major, with a concentration of training in teaching techniques, including lengthy on-site internships, into the last two years. There is a correlary interest in making entry into teacher training programs more "competitive," at least as measured by the comparative SAT scores and GPAs of education majors relative to those of other undergraduate students. Possible teacher licensing tests--perhaps even a national test--are discussed in many proposals. These proposals have received widespread support, but little significant funding. University presidents have endorsed these proposals (Olson, 1987). Several state legislatures have, in recently completed sessions, mandated five-year teacher training degrees as requirements for new teacher certification. Both the NEA and the AFT, or at least their well-entrenched presidents, are enthusiastic about teacher training reform. They, and other reformers, hope that new programs will result in a more "professional" teaching labor force, may translate into increased dollars for teacher

salaries as well as greater professional control over the teacher labor market. Teacher unions see these changes as having a potentially significant impact on their political and bargaining power as well. A long term hope is that more rigorous programs will improve the profession's image and will result eventually in superior education for the nation's children.

However, many of the major arguments supporting these policies are philosophical and political, and not supported by an established and broadly accepted research base. Even on such basic factual issues as the relationship between supply and demand for teachers to century's end--a singularly important question if we are to restrict entry by using more stringent standards--there is considerable debate on how to interpret available statistics (Olson and Rodman, 1987). Moreover, on this issue state-by-state differences may be enormous. Supporters of teacher training reform acknowledge that we do not yet know enough to predict program outcomes for the education labor force, much less eventual impact on classroom results. Moreover, two comprehensive surveys of teachers (Lortie, 1975; Kottcamp, et al., 1986) have little to say about socialization of teachers or even about the first-year teacher experiences. The Metropolitan Life (Harris, 1985) surveys of teacher attitudes and most similar statewide surveys employ pre-coded telephone interviews or self-administered questionnaires. Hence, questions about teacher training are retrospective over long periods about preparation

efficacy, and generate little information about developmental processes as experienced by individuals or organizations.

Teacher preparation reform may have been an issue that gained political momentum far more quickly than a research base could be developed, it is nonetheless almost in place. The time is ripe for educational and organizational sociologists to begin studying its impacts. In this paper I suggest that insights and propositions are available from the literature and that by clearer thinking about how college students learn to be teachers during their undergraduate days, about how they first experience being a teacher, and most of all, about how departmental and school building life provides a template for continuous professional socialization and development throughout their teaching careers. In doing so, I argue that applications of social science theories and research about socialization generally, and about "professional," "occupational," and "organizational socialization" will improve our understanding of teacher socialization.

One way to begin this project is to focus attention on teacher socialization in high schools. This strategy has some particular advantages because high school teacher training in most states and jurisdictions already incorporates two elements of the reform agenda: an academic major and, in most cases, five rather than four years of academic training including some internship experience. Teachers entering junior highs (as opposed to middle schools) have comparable

preparation. Hence, by focusing attention on the socialization of high school teachers we may explore some of the issues generic to five year training programs.

At the same time, we remind the reader that socialization of new teachers is an organizational as well as an individual process. Any generalizations about teacher socialization must compensate for differences between elementary and secondary schools. The comprehensive high schools in which the majority of the nation's students are taught are far larger and much more organizationally complex than the elementary schools or middle schools that feed ninth and tenth graders into them. Departmentalization--the organization of knoweldge by disciplines--is a major reason for this.

II. High School Teacher Socialization as "Moment of Truth"

How do high school teachers learn their jobs? What do we know about this process? Blase (1986: 100), argues that "research on teacher socialization has focused almost exclusively on beginning teachers or on limited dimensions of the experienced teacher's socialization." In general, high school teachers learn "subjects" as part of their college majors and develop classroom management skills and appropriate collegial behavior when they take their first job. Significantly, however, there appears to be little or any research focusing **specifically** on the academic side of teacher training, or for that matter, on how prospective teachers experience their college years in a fashion that might be different from experiences of students headed towards other types of careers. Vreeland and Bidwell (1966) studied major-by-major differences at Harvard, but their frame of reference was faculty perceptions of their own discipline

rather than student experiences. The undifferentiated nature of collegiate experience seems not to have engendered the same type of absorbing ethnographic research that we find, for instance, in studies of training programs in medicine or psychiatry (Becker, et al. 1961; Light, 1980). LeCompte and Ginsburg (1987) did study teacher trainees and hence provide one significant exception. Their finding that because "students discount both the value of what their professors want them to learn and the college's assessment of their own achievement, it may be difficult to predict the degree to which a training program influences their future behaviors as professions [sic]" is less than encouraging (LeCompte and Ginsburg, 1987: 18).

Lortie (1975: 59), however, notes that the break between "occupational" and "organizational" socialization may not be dramatic. New teachers experience "mediated entry" into the profession and come to their first job with expectations fostered by the student teaching experience. Anticipatory socialization aside, research on new teachers suggests a gradual shift from "idealism to realism . . . during the first few teaching years" (Blase, 1986: 100; McArthur, 1978; Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967).

These studies of beginning teachers report findings consistent with parallel research on organizational socialization in the private sector. Feldman (1976), for instance, argues that socialization to new organizational positions encompasses the sequential stages of (1) anticipatory socialization, (2) accommodation, and (3) role management. Jones (1986) and Louis (1980) discuss the "reality" shock new employees face, suggesting that "institutionalized socialization tactics" may be successful in attenuating new employee disorientation and enhancing work

adjustment. These researchers have not entirely captured the ways in which organizational socialization is a two-way process by which newcomers may influence the organizations they join or the extent to which organizational socialization is a long-term, virtually lifelong process. Jones is sensitive to this issue, suggesting in an earlier article (1983) that socialization is a long-term process requiring longitudinal research that also studies what individuals bring to their new organizations.

The most widely-cited work on the issue, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) "Toward A Theory of Organizational Socialization," specifically emphasize organizational efforts to incorporate new members. Their frame of reference is the large corporation, allowing them to assume the presence of the relatively extensive training and trainee programs that are common in the private sector. They argue that organizations may differ on a number of areas, including whether socialization is collective or individual, formal or informal, sequential and serial or random and disjunctive, and fixed or variable. Operationalizing these concepts into measurable variables, and then assessing their frequency and impact could improve our understanding of teacher socialization. Translating the Van Maanen-Schein theoretical framework, and interpolating research findings derived from new employees in corporations, into the educational arena leaves us with some important questions about units of analysis. Should we see the district, the building, or, in very large schools, the department as the ultimate socializing agency for new teachers. What roles do the classroom and the teachers' lounge--obviously the two spots where new and old teachers spend most of their time--play in the socialization process. Do districts have district-based, building-based, or department-based orientation programs or policies? Do they have

mentorship programs? Do they have any formal programs at all? Are teachers hired to fill general job descriptions or specific job slots? What difference does building or department size make on socialization? What differences does it make if the new teacher is the year's only new hire or is one of many? How do we study organizational socialization of veteran teachers in new buildings or new districts?

Theories and research about organizational socialization of teachers, especially of high school teachers, must go beyond implicit assumptions that individuals pass directly from university training in academic disciplines and pedagogic technique to the realities of classroom management and organizational life. New teachers, of course, do experience a "status passage" that transforms them from "student" to "professional" or "teacher." From that moment, and over time, they adjust, developing a set of functional skills that reflect their effectiveness as teachers, their job satisfaction, and their long-term career development. We cannot make the assumption that they never look back.

III. Teacher Socialization as Ongoing Process

In arguing that employing existing theories of organizational socialization may lead us to an inaccurate or at least, for comprehensive high schools, an incomplete view of how individuals are actually socialized into teaching, I will try to explore conceptually the particularly organizational context of high school teacher socialization. To do this it is necessary to look at the reciprocal relationship between training and employing organizations and at the impact departmental

knowledge and social organization may have on the ways high school teachers learn their craft over a period of years or even decades.

Significantly, there is virtually continuous interaction between the institution of occupational orientation, the university, and the institution of organizational socialization, the high school. Scholars from university academic departments make intellectual discoveries and publish them. They write the textbooks high school teachers use. They teach advanced courses high school teachers may take, or even must take, as part of graduate degree and certification programs. Each of these activities strengthens, and keeps continuous, relationships between universities, as teacher training institutions, and high school buildings and departments. Note, moreover, these relationships also exist between university-based academics in the fields of both special education and educational administration. In many cases a single public university has, by reason of proximity, a special relationship with high schools in districts within its geographic region. These relationships are less strong in the elementary education context, although experienced teachers in those districts accepting student teachers from nearby teacher training institutions may have quite regular contact with new developments in teaching.

Equally significant, of course, universities send a more-or-less continuous stream of **new** teachers, each of whom has taken not just individual courses, but a relatively integrated departmental curriculum, into the high schools. In fact, many new teachers are hired partially because their knowledge is especially current, although they in most cases have to pass through an apprenticeship period--an ordeal by fire--before what they have to say will be taken seriously. It is through new teachers

that university departments, and both the new knowledge they generate and the established knowledge they organize and reorganize, affect the institutional environment of classrooms, of departmental life, and of the high school itself. New and veteran teachers may socialize one another, especially as they work together to develop departmental curriculum.

Veteran teachers directly continue their university-based socialization as well. In fact, the institutional structure in many states requires teachers to maintain certification by continuing education. Moreover, virtually all jurisdictions at least tacitly encourage teachers to take additional courses because most teacher contracts reward participation through salary schedules in which steps correspond to post-baccalaureate university credit hours.

This mutual interaction perspective suggests a continuous process, one that may generally be true for most high school teachers teachers and departments. However, we need to underscore the variability that exists between departments within most comprehensive high schools and the consistency of that pattern of variability between high schools. Discipline-based departments differ from one another and these differences are substantial in that they reflect differences in both the structure of knowledge, the ways that knowledge is organized by teachers in order to facilitate their students' learning, and in the ways departments may relate to building administration, district administration, and elements of the public school environment such as parents, state department of education officials, legislators, and others.

Departmental knowledge bases are necessarily reflections of the intellectual disciplines--biology, history, language--from which they are derived. That there are broad and substantial differences between

university departments is well-known and, judging from extensive research literature, relatively well-understood (Biglan, 1973a; 1973b; Lodahl and Gordon, 1972; 1973; Smart and Elton, 1975; Vreeland and Bidwell, 1966). Most of this research has relied heavily on Kuhn's (1977) concept of paradigm. Paradigms, "the shared commitments of a scientific group...what the members of a scientific community, and they alone, share," are social as well as intellectual constructs (Kuhn, 1977: 294). They reflect the way in which scholars construct and view the world, and their sense of paradigm is nurtured and enhanced through undergraduate and graduate training, research, writing and teaching. As undergraduate majors, and later as subject-matter specialists, high school teachers are exposed to and come to adopt much of the paradigmatic world-view of their discipline. They reinforce the paradigm through continuing education and exposure and because they become identified, and develop self-identities, as chemists, mathematicians, or poets.

As Lodahl and Gordon (1972; 1973) and Vreeland and Bidwell (1966) point out, scientific disciplines differ in their consistency, their rigor, their impenetrability by outsiders, and the degree of internal consensus. Their research focuses exclusively on higher education--on research universities in fact--and on academic and scientific disciplines at their highest levels of sophistication close to the cutting edge of intellectual discovery. Interest in the consequences of disciplinary and departmental organization has been nurtured by those studying university budgeting from the "resource dependence" perspective who argue that disciplinary differences in power are related to both the structure of disciplinary knowledge and access to external funding (Pfeffer, 1981). Departmental organization in high schools has similar consequences and

each of the major secondary school academic departments--English, mathematics, science, and social studies--faces a unique task environment, affecting both its power *vis à vis* internal and external constituencies and influencing ways in which teachers may, can, or must work with one another (Paule, 1986).

High school departments differ most markedly on the degree to which staff training is homogeneous and intellectual consensus strong and on the degree to which outsiders--building and district administrators, state regulators, legislators--can be successful in influencing curricula. Mathematics teachers and their departments, for instance, deal with subject matter material they understand as hierarchical in its learning requirements, but about which most department outsiders may know little and they can resist effectively outside efforts to influence curriculum. English and social studies teachers, by contrast, deal with knowledge that is in the public domain and which administrators, legislators, and the public believe they have considerable knowledge and which, more important, need not be learned in a specific sequence (Paule, 1986).

Differences **between** departments, and experiential similarities of **members within** departments, encourage the development of what Van Maanen and Barley (1984) have termed "occupational communities." Math departments are likely to have strong occupational communities because of needs they have to couple tightly their course sequences. Teachers in English/Language Arts departments may share a broad point of view and a love of literature, but different emphases within collegiate majors and different teaching sub-specialties and interests--drama, poetry, American literature for instance--encourage development of occupational communities as a function of relationships to the larger building or district

organization. Science and social studies departments are a bit less homogeneous, as each is composed of teachers trained in several disciplines. In social studies teachers who have majored in history, sociology, or economics may have some difficulty coming to complete consensus on their common subject matter, and it is possible that differences may be reinforced by the degree to which teachers continue their education in interdisciplinary or narrowly disciplinary courses and programs. Science teachers, especially physics and chemistry teachers the structure of whose disciplinary majors resembles mathematics, may, especially in large departments, form two or three occupational communities.

IV. Research and Policy Implications

While we think of socialization into teaching as a process by which young men and women learn pedagogic skills and discipline based subject matter and are the recipients of principal and veteran teacher wisdom, this does not fully define the socialization process in high schools. Frequently new teachers bring more than the callowness of and enthusiasm of youth to schools. They bring also new teaching ideas and new developments in the discipline to their first jobs. In short, by hiring new teachers, district and building administrators not only fill positions but provide a way for older colleagues to keep in touch with their fields.

This picture of teacher socialization has some potential research implications. First of all, it suggests that considering the building or the department rather than the individual new teacher as a unit of analysis will help us see some elements of teacher socialization more clearly. While this may imply a more extensive use of observational and

other "qualitative" research methods, even some excellent ethnographic studies such as Kyle's (1987) study of a new second grade teacher focus only on the classroom rather than the larger organizational setting. Second, studying teacher socialization means studying more than new teachers. Veteran teachers are participants in the socialization process as both agents of socialization and as learners. Research on teachers who transfer between buildings or districts, and especially research on teachers from the "reserve pool," who return to teaching after an absence of several years might help us separate out effects of learning different aspects of the complex role of teacher. Imaginative survey approaches, for instance those that attempt to access organizational issues such as organizational culture or ideology may prove especially useful in researching intra-organizational transmission of knowledge and culture. Third, we might study specifically formally appointed agents of organizational socialization including principals, vice-principals, especially those who include curriculum as a primary responsibility, department heads, and teacher mentors. It will be particularly instructive to examine possible relationships between strategies, tactics, and styles of "instructional leadership" and the continuing socialization of teachers.

Policy implications are less clear cut. However, if teacher socialization is a long term process for individual teachers, then reform should incorporate career development activities of all kinds and probably should not be directly solely towards university-based degree-granting programs. National teacher boards, emphasizing national testing and certification, especially if graded by ascending skill levels, potentially capture the life-long nature of teacher socialization but necessarily

define teacher competency outside the organizational framework of teacher work and teacher learning. Because teachers differ in their ability and motivation to continue career development, districts and the states will have to find organizational strategies that encourage teachers to have an active rather than passive approach to their own long-term socialization. Finally, to the extent that districts are large enough to have flexibility in teacher assignment, they must develop ways to look not only at fitting teachers to vacant slots, but also to consider more carefully than they do now the age and skill mix of teachers in a given department. This requires creative collaboration with teacher unions and brings them into the teacher socialization process as a more active partner.

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